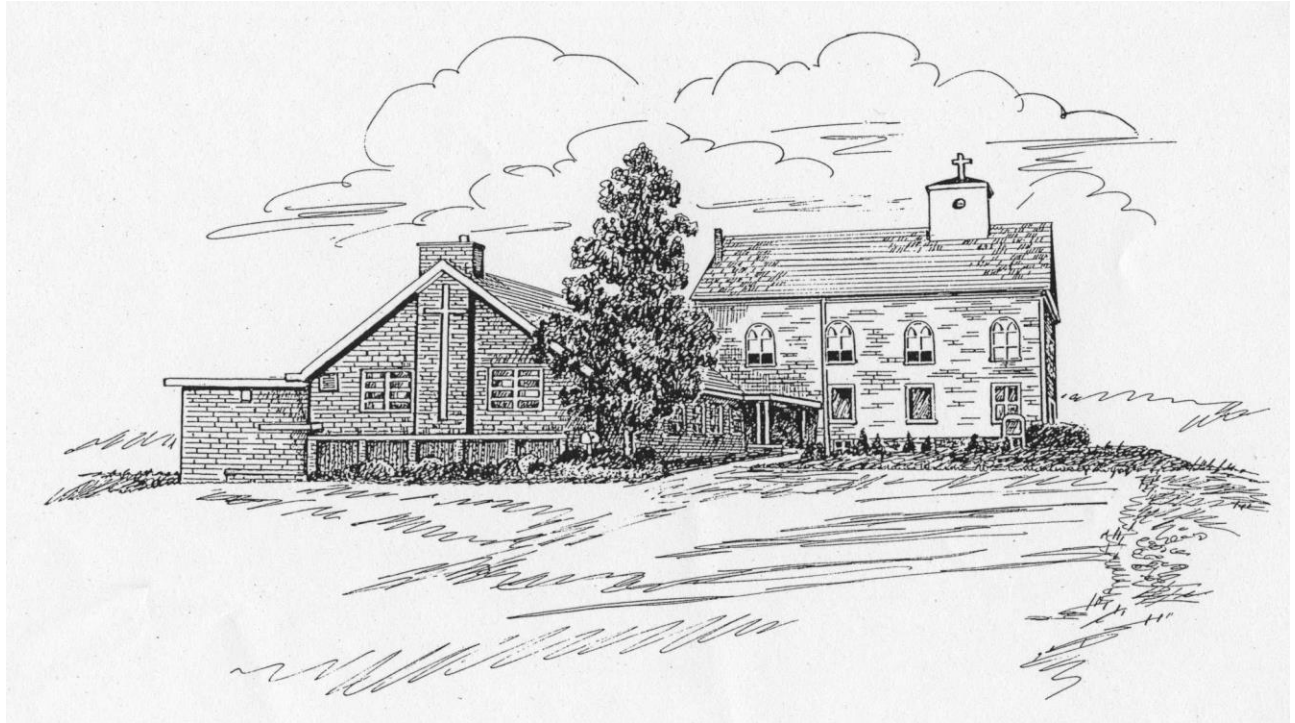


WISPS OF STRAW



St. James Lutheran Church Newsletter

May - June 2014

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*“Serving Christ in Word and Deed”
for over 260 Years*

Pastor's Letter

Malcolm Muggeridge was a very famous and highly respected British journalist who for many years was an ardent atheist. His opinions and thoughts were coveted by American publishers and he occasionally wrote the editorial page for Time magazine. Toward the end of his illustrious career as the Dean of British broadcasters, he became a Christian.

Several years ago he was a guest at a breakfast in Washington, D.C. where he shared his life story. When he had finished his testimony, he made a number of comments about world affairs, all of which were very pessimistic. One of those present asked, "Dr. Muggeridge, you have been very pessimistic. Don't you have any reason for optimism?" He replied, "I could not be more optimistic than I am, because my hope is in Jesus Christ alone."

He allowed that remark to settle in for a few seconds, and then he added, "Just think if the apostolic church had pinned its hopes on the Roman Empire!" (Halverson / The Living Body)

Here is the challenge for all of us who are part of our church, and perhaps other churches as well. The statistics are not friendly to churches being filled with congregants in the future. While there is much talk among people about being "spiritual" little of that "spirituality" seems to be directed at organized religion. Over and over again we keep hearing of the rise of the "nones", people with no affiliation and no desire for one.

What happened and why is this so? One reason is the role of the media. In their quest for "ratings" in an increasingly competitive market, extremists of the faith get a front row seat in terms of coverage. Never mind that these extremists really don't represent how you and I think and feel, it will grab the public's attention, and the media outlet can have bragging rights for "market share". Religion then like everything else is turned into a "clown car" spectacle, and seekers or inquirers get turned off immediately.

Secondly the church itself contributes to it. In some ways I guess we should expect it since really the church is made up of sinners "saved by grace". Just because we are saved by grace doesn't stop sin. Sin happens in various ways; it can be ugly and cause damage. Perfection in the church is never going to happen. While the antidote to this is confession, forgiveness, and a renewed emphasis on the grace of God, what sin does still stinks, and will be with us until our Lord returns!

Thirdly, and I think it is connected to the above paragraph, is the how slowly change happens in the church. Sometimes glaciers move faster than the work of the church. When I read of some churches which have done great things by accelerating the rate of change, it has extracted a heavy price on those who steer it. Or the other story of the church so far "on the ropes" that they are desperate for anything which will bring them renewed life and growth, and will have their own version of "throwing a Hail Mary" hoping it saves the day.

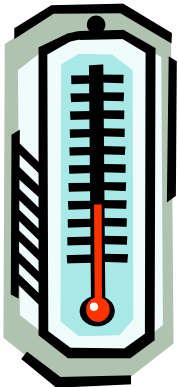
Well, when all is said and done it looks pretty grim, doesn't it? Yet I totally agree with the late Malcom Muggeridge in the quote. Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church, and Jesus made promises of the endurance for the church and his resurrection presence always with it. In this we should be unquestionably optimistic because our hope is based on Jesus Christ alone.

Your brother in Christ

Pastor John

100 Days of Ministry and Mission

As you enter the Christian Ed building, whether for church, Sunday school, or an event in Ed Frey Hall you may have noticed the change in the white board presentation since the beginning of last month. The Stewardship Committee took this idea from a presentation Pastor Scott Schantzenbach made in March. Essentially it shows what areas of ministry and mission or church is taking on in that period of time. Next you will notice the thermometer in the center signifying if we are reaching the financial goal in that period of time to fund those "ministries". Once those events have been



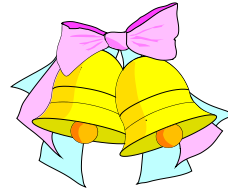
completed we show pictures of the completed event. Finally when the period of time is over we throw ourselves a celebration with a cake or some other appropriate food to give thanks to God for having completed particular events for mission and ministry, and

it makes an appropriate time to thank those who made it happen. One other piece will be the addition of some sort of "needs tree" where folks can see what tasks are needed for a certain ministry, and be able to share their talent to make it happen.

Please see me or anyone else on Stewardship if you have any questions.

Pr. John

Wedding Bells



On Friday, May 23rd, Kathi Smith and Jeffrey White exchanged marriage vows at St. James with Pastor John officiating.

Congratulations to the bride and groom, with our prayers and best wishes for a long and happy future.

Special Congregational Meeting

At the meeting held after worship on May 25th the proposal to go ahead with a county grant application to fund exterior repairs was placed before the congregation. The two alternatives are a full restoration of the sanctuary brickwork (with a cost of approximately \$250,000), or a full restoration of the front wall and repair of only the most critical areas on the other three (approximately \$120,000).

After some discussion as to means of making the required 25% of the total available from our funds, it was decided to apply for a grant to cover the full job, with the option of doing the lesser work if the full grant amount will not be awarded and re-applying for enough to complete the project in the future.

Once the results of the grant application are known, there will be another meeting to decide on our financing strategy.

† In Memoriam †



Our long time member Frank S. Parr, 95, of Pohatcong joined the heavenly host on Tuesday, March 25th.

Frank was active in the life of our church, serving on Council and for 13 years as Boy Scout liaison. He served his country in the Army during World War II and was an American Legion member. Frank also served the community as a Life Member of the Huntington Fire Company.

We offer our condolences to, and prayers for, his wife Eva (with whom he shared 70 years of marriage), as well as daughters Lois Steible, Carol Steible and Judy Hengst, and his entire family.

Steven C. Heater, 44, of Pohatcong went to be with the Lord on Tuesday, April 1st. The sympathies of the congregation are with his mother, Margaret, and his family for their loss, in the assurance of his eternal reward.

Thank You

Through your generosity the church raised \$275 for our Links of Love ministry, and the Sunday School children added another \$125. We will be sending checks for \$200 each to ELCA World Hunger and the local St. Luke's Episcopal Church food pantry. In addition, Thrivent Financial will be sending checks for partial matching amounts to both.

First Holy Communion

On Maundy Thursday, six young people of St. James joyfully received the body and blood of our Lord for the first time. As a further sign of their advancing Christian formation, they were each presented with their own copies of the Bible.



Shown with Pastor John are (l-r):

Zimran Yaqub
Emma Raub
Gigi Holman
Kimberly Eaton
Jeffrey Raub
Nathaniel Galusha



A cake and refreshments reception in their honor was held in Frey Hall after worship.

.....
*When you get to your wit's end, you'll
find God lives there.*

Senior League Notes *"Fellowship over Fifty"*



The final meeting of the season will be on Wednesday, June 4th, at 6:00 pm. We will be having the spaghetti and meatball dinner that was cancelled due to weather during the winter. Main course is on hand, but salads and/or desserts will be appreciated. Please call Carol Meixsell at 908-454-6734 if you plan to attend.

Picnic Time!

Our annual Straw Church Picnic will be held at Pohatcong Park at 11:30 am on Sunday, June 22nd. This is the same location as last year, on the right side of Rte. 519 South, less than a mile past the I-78 underpass.

A sign-up sheet is in the Frey Hall lobby for those who will be bringing food and drink to share. Come one and all for an afternoon of good food and fellowship, along with games and fun for the children.



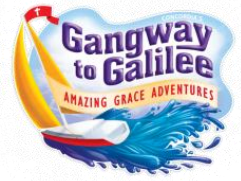
Chancel Flowers

The flowers that grace our chancel can be donated any weekend (except during Lent) in memory of your loved ones, to commemorate a special occasion, or in thanks for graces received. A sign-up chart is in the narthex, or you may contact the church office.

Helen's Floral will bill you directly for the cost.

Vacation Bible School

The time for VBS will be here before we know it. The theme this year is Gangway to Galilee - Amazing Grace Adventure. It will run from July 21st to July 25th.



As always, we are in need of both adult and teen volunteers to make this a worthwhile experience both for the attendees and the church. There will also be the satisfaction that comes from participating as a volunteer in one of the most important ministries of St. James. Please contact Karoline Avard (kaavard@gmail.com) for more information.

Frey Hall Historic Area

The historical cabinet has been refreshed with new materials from our archives. Stop by and see intriguing items from our Straw Church past that may have not seen the light of day for years.

We intend to rotate items through the cabinet at intervals in the future in order to keep it interesting, and also make public a larger portion of our historic treasures.

Car Wash

Boy Scout Troop 56 will be holding a car wash in the church parking lot on Saturday, June 7th from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. Get your vehicles sparkly clean and show your appreciation for the work the scouts have been doing to keep our building and grounds looking good.

Thanks to You

Starting with this newsletter, as best I am able, I am going to write an informal "Thank you" column. I may not mention everyone so I ask forgiveness in advance, if I miss a name or two. Since I am pastor, I guess I am the best one to do this, since I see all sorts of people doing good things that make it better for all of us at St. James.

Pastor John

THANKS TO:

- Steve Stocker, Glen Gercie, Barry Slack, and Ron Knoble for their watchful eyes and care of the building
- Anderson Raub and all the folk that supervise our Community Service people, which has been instrumental in keeping the inside of our church in good shape
- Kathy Raub, the Fundraising Committee, and those who helped make the Spring Vendor Fair a wonderful event
- All those who not only work at and make our "Straw church" Country Breakfast successful, but make it great time of fellowship as well
- Patrick Csiszlak and the Iron Monkey Patrol from Troop 56 - Matthew G., Spencer A., Justin H., Brandon H., Steven K. and Mark P. - for beautifying the front flower beds of our church; also for Patrick's help in cutting our lawn and helping with cleaning up after many snowfalls
- Glen Gercie for his hand in plowing over the winter
- Carol Meixsell and all those working in Senior League whether in providing food or a program; it is always a good evening for those who attend
- Pam Van Haneghan and the Sunday School staff for the awesome job they have been doing in making the Sunday School a great experience for all the children that attend
- Our youth for a wonderful Youth Sunday, and the different ways many of them contribute to the life of the church
- Liz Kolba and those working with her to organize a successful and enjoyable picnic
- All the ushers who welcome us to worship and keep things running smoothly
- All those who made the "soup and sandwich" portion of our Lenten program happen with food and helping to set up
- Our Property Committee under the supervision of Bob Agans; Alan Hardenberg, Brian Fleming, Patrick Csisziak, and others who have occasionally pitched in to help
- Karen Coleman and Dave Miller for their dedicated efforts in their areas of service to the church
- George Scherer for his behind the scene work on a number of different projects
- The Historical Committee whose efforts have been a blessing to the church
- A very belated thank you to the congregation for their thoughtfulness to me last Christmas
- The anonymous person who has been giving my wife and I gift cards from ShopRite a few times

Sunday School News

We have had Pajama Day, Hats Day and Bring Your Parents Day. May 25th will be our last official class day, on which we will be wearing red, white and blue for Memorial Day in honor of our veterans.

We have had two mission projects this spring. Earlier, we raised \$125.01 in conjunction with Links of Love to help combat hunger both locally and world-wide. Currently we are collecting sports equipment for the Synod Bosnia Mission trip.

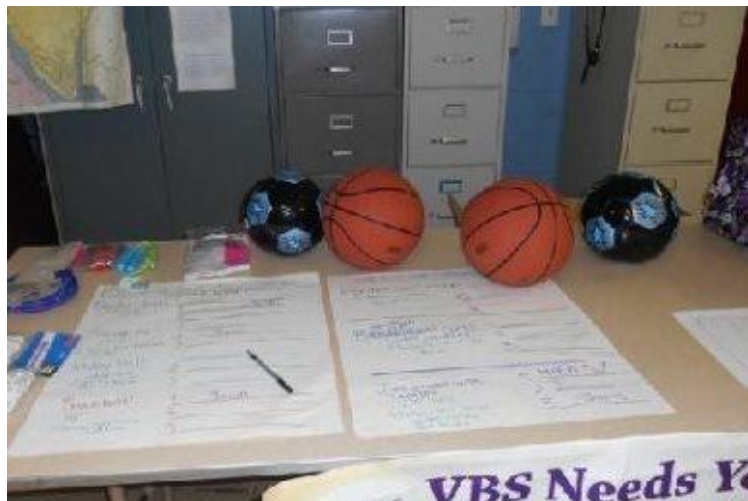
Sunday, June 8th will be Sunday School Recognition Day, with activities that follow below.

8:45 am Worship Sunday School Recognition

- Sunday School children will be recognized
- Thank You to teachers
- Sunday School children singing "He Got the Whole World in His Hands"
- Grade 3 students receive Bibles
- Special speaker Cliff will share about the Bosnia Mission trip for which the Sunday School and Youth Group families donated sports equipment.

10:00 to 11:00 am Special Church and Sunday School Coffee Hour in Frey Hall

- Our speaker Cliff will share show & tell items about the Bosnia Mission trip.
- Signing of sports equipment and blessing
- Gangway to Galilee VBS promotion
- Sunday School pictures slide show
- Church Picnic promotion
- Refreshments



Confirmation

Confirmation will be held on Sunday, June 1st, at the 8:45 am worship. The four confirmands this year are Nicole Fleming, Chris Komar, Wayne Van Blarcom, and Jeremiah Williamson.

Youth Group News

We have been having meeting about once a month on Sunday evenings at the church. We also participated in the Kid to Kid sport camp with the Sunday School children. We had our Youth Sunday service on April 27th with Douglas Wrede (below, left) and Sean LaCourte (right) doing the sermon.



On May 18th we participated in two mission projects, Crop Walk (below, left) and singing at the nursing home service (right). Our Crop Walk raised \$307.00. Later in the day we had a party at the Chemidlin's home, with ping pong, kick ball, snacks and pizza.



**“STRAW CHURCH: PRIDE IN OUR PAST, STRENGTH IN OUR PRESENT,
LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR OUR FUTURE”**

Honoring our Veterans

Continuing a tradition begun last year, Pastor John took a moment during Memorial Day weekend worship to remember the war veterans who are buried in the St. James Cemetery.

This weekend the names of the two War of 1812 veterans were read.

Celebrating the Reformation

In 2017, ELCA members will join Lutherans and other Christians around the world in observing the 500th anniversary of a spiritual reformation that began when Martin Luther posted his "Ninety-five Theses" on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517.

Preaching a few years later, Luther said, "I opposed indulgences ... but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. I did nothing; the Word did everything."

Nearly 500 years later, the results of this evangelical confidence in God's forgiving and liberating word are evident today in Christian communities of all types.

In the years leading to 2017, ELCA members, congregations and synods will observe the anniversary of this evangelical reformation in a variety of ways with numerous partners. Watch www.ELCA.org and future issues of *Seeds for the Parish* for more information about opportunities and resources for observing this milestone in the church's ongoing life.

Reprinted from Seeds for the Parish (ELCA)

A Worthy Cause

Many of you have met my son John when he is visiting with us, and last year he helped with Vacation Bible School. This is from his personal Facebook page devoted to the "Goin' Bald for Bucks" campaign. Monies will go to Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, NY, one of the top cancer institutes in the country. He has a fundraising goal of \$500.00 dollars, and has his "haircut" scheduled for August of this year.

Pr. John



Join me in my efforts to support Goin' Bald for Bucks 2013-2014! Goodbye 3 years of hair growth!

Welcome to my Goin' Bald for Bucks personal page! It means a lot to me that you would take the time to visit my fundraising page, and I hope that you can support me and Roswell Park Cancer Institute!

One out of three Americans will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Most of us know someone that has successfully battled cancer. We also know someone who has had their life taken by it.

This year, I will be Goin' Bald for Bucks to raise funds for critical research and patient care at one of the nation's top comprehensive cancer centers - Roswell Park Cancer Institute. The money I raise will help researchers and physicians better understand the causes of cancer and discover new methods of prevention, diagnosis and treatment. See more at:

<http://baldforbucks2014buf.kintera.org/faf/donorReg/donorPledge.asp?ievent=1089422&supid=407060203#sthash.J7MTjm4F.dpuf>

MORRIS CANAL TOUR

In 1831 a new transportation system was opened between Phillipsburg and Newark, New Jersey. It passed within three quarters of a mile of our old Straw Church. Considered an engineering marvel, the Morris Canal made use of the water of Lake Hopatcong for powering locks and planes to carry canal boats over the mountains of north central Jersey.

What influence did the local portion of this huge project have on our small rural congregation? Did it influence the decision to build, in 1834, the large substantial structure we worship in today?



Local historian Jim Lee, Jr. may provide answers to these and other questions as he gives us a tour specifically adapted to the local Straw Church connection. Plane 9 West, the largest and most powerful boat lifting machine of the canal, was known as Port Warren. Jim grew up in the "plane house" here and learned, over the years, about the operation and history of the canal. Some of his ancestors worked on the canal and are buried at Straw Cemetery. He also has an in-depth knowledge of local "Straw" families going back to the Revolutionary War.

Names such as Beidelman, Feit, Kline, Sharps and Shipman will enhance this tour, showing the interaction with past Straw Church members who witnessed this mechanical wonder in action.

The walk through the spillway tunnel to see the actual water turbine is slightly strenuous; however, chairs on the porch of the old plane house may be an inviting alternative to this portion of the tour.

Date: Sunday, June 29th, 2014

Time: 1:00 pm sharp

Duration: One and a half to two hours

Place: Morris Canal Plane 9 West

Directions: Exactly one mile north on Rte. 519 from the traffic light adjacent to our church. Drive up the long straight driveway on the right to parking at the top.

In order to gauge the tour group size we ask that you sign up on the Morris Canal Tour sheet in the lobby of Frey Hall, or you may contact Charlotte or Dave Morris at (908-859-0723) if you are planning to attend. Bring a friend, for a cool shady historic Sunday afternoon. Hope to see you there.